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Reversibility: Maintaining a Strategic Edge in a Constrained World

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Abstract

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Reversibility:
Maintaining a Strategic Edge in a Constrained World

> Never let the future disturb you. You will meet it, if you have to, with the same weapons of reason which today arm you against the present.
>
> —Marcus Aurelius[1]
> Roman Emperor

The United States has been actively engaged in major contingencies abroad for more than ten years. The military force involved includes both the Active Component (AC) and the Reserve Component (RC). As this era of major conflict draws to a close, the nation's civilian and military leadership must determine an appropriate, affordable force structure by which the US will prepare itself for an uncertain future in its role as a world leader. The RC, including both the nation's National Guard and Reserve forces, builds capacity for the military enterprise. It does so at a fraction of the overall cost of the AC, often cross-utilizing civilian skills in military jobs with the same ultimate readiness levels as their active teammates. In a fiscally constrained environment, force structure decisions reside on a fulcrum where perfect balance is difficult to achieve, yet still essential. Reversibility is an effective concept the US can use to achieve that precious balance in defense force structure.

Defense Strategic Guidance

Reversibility is a term with multiple meanings; thus, it is easily miscommunicated in either send or receive mode. The term has been used in a reactive context, such as reversing budget decisions, and also as an implication that government decisions are tentative or have the potential to require quick program reversals.[2] The context presented in this paper is related to intentional programming decisions and is defined in the 2012 Defense strategic guidance:

> We have sought to differentiate between those investments that should be made today and those that can be deferred. This includes an accounting of our ability to make a course change that could be driven by many factors, including shocks or evolutions in the strategic, operational, economic, and technological spheres. Accordingly, the concept of "reversibility"– including the vectors on which we place our industrial base, our people, our active-reserve component balance, our posture, and our partnership emphasis – is a key part of our decision calculus.[3]

Simply put, US strategic leaders must make tough choices between essential manpower or material programs yet retain the ability to regenerate to deal with changes in a volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous (VUCA) environment.[4] Reversibility, when acted upon, is in reaction to changes in the VUCA environment; however, strategic leaders must maintain an intentional focus on preserving the capability to reverse as opposed to relying completely on ad hoc measures which are reactive and unplanned. The AC/RC balance is an aspect of reversibility that deserves attention. The RC is an economical capacity builder for the Total Force through both mobilization and intentional operational mission focus.

Historical Lessons

As the United States completes a decade of continuous conflict abroad, it is worthwhile to pause to review history to harvest the valuable lessons from previous generations. It is helpful to look at examples on different ends of the spectrum, from the perspectives of both total and limited war. World War II is the last time the United States mobilized for a total war, while the Vietnam conflict presented very different political challenges in the limited war spectrum.

World War II Mobilization

The isolationist movement after World War I was a result of "widespread disgust with the results of World War I: massive human carnage; the wrecking of some empires

but survival of others; the appalling failure of Old World Europe."[5] Added to this isolationist sentiment was the feeling that the United States was immune from attack due to geography and its status as a "continental power."[6] Thus, the US entered the World War II environment with an interesting dilemma with respect to mobilizing manpower. The primary issues included military manpower to fight the war and a civilian workforce to run the war industry. Total mobilization of the population was required to prosecute the war. In 1943, the military required 1.5 million Soldiers and Sailors in addition to 3.2 million civilian workers. The government designated a small number of jobs nondeferrable to encourage voluntary movement into the war industry positions.[7] While the vast majority of military forces were generated from the draft, it is important to highlight the role of the RC in the conflict. One quarter of all Army officers who served were Army Reservists. A combined total of 57,000 officers and over 200,000 Army Reserve Soldiers served in World War II.[8]

Though young men aged 18 through 25 still register for the Selective Service today, the United States has been committed to an all-volunteer force (AVF) for four decades.[9] Success in a war such as World War II, a total war, was not possible without forces in excess of the existing standing army. Utilization of the RC as well as a draft was necessary to secure the required military forces for such a large undertaking. One could argue that the nation successfully used the notion of reversibility, albeit in an ad hoc fashion, to successfully prosecute the war despite post-World War I isolationism.

Vietnam Mobilization

The early 1960s brought about a limited war theory during the Cold War aimed at fighting two and a half wars in very specific locations of Western Europe, Asia, and a small-scale contingency in a location to be determined. Since the US could not be in all

places simultaneously in peacetime, it developed the concept of a strategic reserve which could respond to conflicts when needed. Ironically, this particular strategic reserve concept included both active and reserve forces.[10]

Unlike World War II, the Vietnam conflict was not a total war for the United States. Also unlike World War II, the RC was not fully utilized as it had been previously. In her book on the American military's rise beyond what was intended by the founding fathers, Rachel Maddow presented President Lyndon B. Johnson's dilemma in sending troops to war without sending the entire nation into war. This dilemma included the decision to omit the mobilization of the Reserve to prevent political pressure from Congress as well as prevent a negative reaction from the Soviet Union.[11] By the end of 1968, the US had over half a million troops deployed to Vietnam because previous levels provided an inadequate means to secure the limited US aims.[12] Between 1964 and 1973, more than 3.4 million men and women served on active duty in Southeast Asia.[13] Though the forces in theater at one time generally represented a fraction of total available forces, the remaining forces were "skeletonized and would have required considerable replenishment if called on to serve."[14] By that time, the President could not mobilize nor deploy resources the nation did not have.

World War II was a great example of total national mobilization and US reversal from isolationism into a two-theater total war. The means were developed out of necessity since the previous war was cast as "the war to end all wars." The nation reversed itself in manpower and material with the sacrifice of many Americans. On the other hand, Vietnam was an example of an escalating manpower drain utilizing the draft

instead of the Reserve. Between Vietnam and the USS Pueblo incident[15] in Korea, just over 30,000 Reservists were involuntarily mobilized.[16]

By comparison, over three quarters of a million Reservists were mobilized, both voluntarily and involuntarily, between 2001 and 2011 for the multiple operations affiliated with the global war on terror.[17] The shift to the AVF in 1973 and Total Force policies are explanations for the vastly different use of the RC in recent campaigns.[18] The Total Force concept was coined by Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird and emphasized increased reliance on the Guard and Reserve. The concept was a result of the end of the draft as a means to fill manpower requirements.[19] Based on this historical point, an important choice faced today is highlighted; the nation can either continue using the AVF or drift back to the use of a draft to fill the ranks when needed. Current Defense strategic guidance directs the former as the way ahead.[20] The limited nature of future conflicts requires strategic agility with respect to Reserve forces. The US must have the ability to change course in light of changes in the environment as the Defense strategic guidance directs. There are costs and risks associated with that capability.

The Resource Dilemma

The basic requirement is a good start to any dilemma regarding resources. This is especially true with a federal deficit in excess of $1 trillion.[21] The AC/RC balance is detailed in the 2012 Defense strategic guidance. If financial resources were not an issue, the simplest and most flexible answer would lie in a 100 percent active component military. A full-time force gives the most options in responding to crises worldwide on behalf of the US government, provided the right capabilities are resourced correctly. However, the US cannot afford such a force structure, and it must rely on

alternate methods to build a force with adequate capacity to answer with unmatched capability when necessary.

An alternative approach to force planning is utilizing current capabilities to produce as much military capacity as possible. A capabilities-based approach is somewhat inevitable in the politically-charged programming arena. This paper, however, approaches the issue of AC/RC balance primarily from a requirements standpoint. The breadth of the US Defense strategy precludes Service-specific requirements within the scope of this essay. Using documents such as the overarching strategic guidance, as well as the *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020*, general requirements for all Services are discussed.

Future Requirements

The January 2012 Defense strategic guidance includes the following five major tenets: 1) rebalance force structure to the Pacific and Middle East while sustaining alliances elsewhere, 2) defeat an adversary in one theater while denying aggression on other fronts, 3) protect key investments in technology, 4) cease sizing active forces to conduct large and protracted stability operations, and 5) restructure in a way that can reverse or regenerate capabilities if conditions change in the future.[22] The *Joint Force 2020* defined the "far target" for force requirements, primarily in mission roles, which contains eight key elements: mission command; seize, retain and exploit the initiative; global agility; partnering; flexibility in establishing Joint Forces; cross-domain synergy; use of flexible, low-signature capabilities; and increasing discrimination to minimize unintended consequences.[23] Lack of mention of the term "reserve" throughout the document is indicative of the mission focus of the concept, which is accomplished by

whichever component, Active, Reserve, or a mix, is suited for the job. Force structure composition must be intentional and programmed accordingly.

Current Reserve Force Structure

As of September 2010, the total Department of Defense (DOD) reserve was just over three million strong. Of that number, one-third of the force was ready reserve, which includes the selected reserve (SELRES), individual ready reserve (IRR) and inactive National Guard (ING).[24] The SELRES is the highest priority of reserve forces and includes part-time Reservists, full-time reserve forces responsible for supporting the part-time force, and Individual Mobilization Augmentees (IMA). IMAs differ from unit members in that they are assigned to roles within the AC which they support during contingencies. The ready reserve inactive categories, IRR and ING, provide a manpower pool of trained personnel. They do not actively participate in unit activities with the exception of ING members who muster with their units once per year.[25]

The Army, both Guard and Reserve, comprise the majority of the reserve forces. The US Army Reserve (USAR) contains a large contingent of the Army's combat support and combat service support capabilities, including transportation, medical, civil affairs and psychological operations units. The Army National Guard (ARNG) includes combat units in addition to the support roles filled by the USAR. Both the ARNG and Air National Guard (ANG) provide support to their state governors, and the ANG provides nearly 100 percent of the air defense of the US. The remaining Service RCs generally perform the same type missions as the active component of the respective Service.[26]

The concepts of "strategic reserve" and "operational reserve" have been popular topics throughout the Reserve in the past decade of sustained conflict. The RAND Corporation, in its monograph *Rethinking the Reserves*, defined the "strategic reserve"

as forces designed to meet strategic mission requirements with expected mobilization one time per generation. The “operational force,” on the other hand, is expected to perform operational missions on a rotating basis.[27] The hallmark of force structure planning for the RC is ensuring requirements are filled with resources able to respond appropriately.

Current law allows the President to mobilize no more than 200,000 reserve members of the SELRES and IRR to active duty.[28] The 2012 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) elaborates on the mobilization provisions by allowing state governors to request assistance following a disaster. In addition, the Secretary of Defense may initiate the mobilization of reserve forces to respond.[29] Moreover, the 2012 NDAA presents a provision for the Secretary of Defense to mobilize up to 60,000 reservists to active duty for not more than one year to support preplanned, budgeted missions supporting the combatant commands.[30] Short of calls to active duty by the President or Secretary of Defense, the RC is resourced for readiness training in anticipation of mobilization. Title 10 of US Code, Chapter 1005, “Elements of Reserve Components,” directs each member of the ready reserve to participate in a minimum of 48 drill periods and 14 days of active duty for training, or serve on active duty for training not more than 30 days.[31] These numbers are important to this study because they frame the capacity a Reservist brings to the fight.

Matching Resources to Requirements

The *Joint Force 2020* concept makes no mention of use of a reserve or active component; it merely states elements of the concept. However, when one looks at the President’s security strategy, there is a distinct call for a military reflective of the economies of scale facilitated by a strong reserve component. Existing tenets in

strategic guidance bolster this argument. Direction to cease sizing active forces to conduct large and protracted stability operations calls for a scalable quick reaction force. Restructuring in a way that can reverse or regenerate capabilities if conditions change in the future demands educated risk-taking in scaling back force structure. The RC is able to join its AC partner in creating forces that fit this new strategic environment.

There is more than one way to fulfill a requirement regardless of the task. This resource conundrum is no exception. The VUCA environment requires careful consideration and deliberate risk-taking to get the greatest return on the investment of precious taxpayer dollars for defense of the US. Reversibility is a conceptual framework that can help the DOD meet the requirements of this constrained environment.

Creating a Reversible Force Structure

The President's strategic guidance provides a discernible goal to planners and programmers given the responsibility of building a world class armed force with limited financial resources. Direction to "cease sizing active forces to conduct large and protracted stability operations" implies the US armed forces will not be expected to remain in place for extended periods of time following hostilities.[32] Theoretically, this should reduce the overall need for rotational forces, though these type units certainly have great utility within the future RC force structure. The requirement to "restructure in a way that can reverse or regenerate capabilities" offers guidance directing force structure changes that can be easily reversed, if required.[33] As is typical of strategic-level guidance, the President's emphasis points do not specify reversal/regeneration timeframes. Two separate capacity-building paths are best framed as immediate access for missions, such as those typically using low-density/high-demand (LD/HD) forces

requiring frequent support, and requirements that can be delayed until programmatic changes in force structure take effect.

The topic of AC/RC force structure is important due in part to the conflicts the US has been engaged in the past decade. Numerous studies offer various opinions, proposed solutions, and alternatives to strategic leaders concerning the RC and its future. The *Comprehensive Review of the Future Role of the Reserve Component,* published in 2011 by the Joint Staff and Office of the Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, provided recommendations to the Secretary of Defense "to inform decisions regarding the future role of the RC that are consistent with the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review Report."[34]

Words matter when discussing scarce resources. The terms "strategic reserve" and "operational reserve" have distinct meaning with respect to readiness expectations and resource allocation. The *Comprehensive Review* highlights the inconsistent and imprecise use of these terms with respect to the Reserve component. Specific recommendations suggest use of these terms should be discontinued.[35] While there are subtle similarities between the two legacy terms, which often leads to confusion, it is important to frame this issue in the context of a paradigm shift to facilitate the development of creative options for the RC.

Regenerating Increased Capacity: Immediate Response

Certain mission areas often require immediate support, for example Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR). This mission area is critical to all Services with specific capacity requirements that fluctuate proportionally with demand from the operations and agencies requiring ISR support. Other examples of mission sets frequently requiring quick response are special operations and the medical field in all

Services. The medical mission carries a steady requirement in garrison, but potentially requires a significant increase in deployed capacity in the event of major combat operations (MCO). All three of these example mission areas are “no fail” and are conceptually worthy of a fully-resourced active force structure. However, the US military is not exempt from adopting measures of austerity in response to fiscal constraints. While decrementing AC force structure potentially induces a measure of risk, a ready, reliable, and accessible RC can mitigate that potential risk and generate the needed capacity to respond.

The *Comprehensive Review* presents potential roles of the Reserve Component across the Range of Military Operations: Large-Scale Conventional Campaign, Large-Scale Stability Operation, Steady State Engagement Activities, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, Homeland Defense, Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA), and Institutional Support.[36] The report expands on specific suitable mission areas for rotational units, teams, individual reservists, and institutional support tasks. Intelligence and medical mission sets are specifically mentioned as well; however, the special operations mission is not listed.[37] Perhaps special operations missions are understood to be a part of the full-spectrum operations listed since the mission set is not specifically mentioned otherwise. Regardless, LD/HD mission sets, such as special operations, deserve a suitability review.

Mission suitability is a subjective lens with the potential for distortion depending on one’s perspective. For example, the *Comprehensive Review* states, “among the keys to properly employing Guard and Reserve capabilities are predictability of use, predictability of funding, and predictability of access.”[38] This three part suitability test of

predictable use, funding and access is well-intentioned and logical. However, if one regards these three “keys” as credible threats or risks to ultimate success in employing the RC, then one must also review possible countermeasures and alternate views.

By definition, LD/HD forces are in frequent high demand, so while there is no easy countermeasure to these threats, there are unit architectures that can create built-in capacity utilizing RC forces. The US Air Force uses the concept of unit associations in which AC and RC units share equipment yet maintain two separate personnel structures. Associations date back to 1968 when the US Air Force Reserve began sharing flying and maintenance duties of aircraft with an active duty unit.[39] The US Navy conducted its first integrated active-reserve deployment aboard the USS Gearing in 1971.[40] Increased capacity is inherently possible in these units with habitual, structured working relationships. Maintaining trained reserve personnel is the first part of the equation while the issues of funding and access must also be addressed to ensure successful capacity building capability.

For RC units and personnel to be accessible, the unit must be legally structured and funded in a way that enables that culture. Neither the current legal mobilization authority nor the basic funding for participation in the RC present a reserve force prepared for immediate response. There are sound reasons for these safeguards, and senior leaders must be intimately familiar with those reasons or risk losing trained Citizen Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, Airmen, and Coast Guardsmen from the AVF.

One major factor is that participation expectations are based on selected service categories which Reservists normally select based on their particular circumstances. Many Reservists have families and civilian jobs that, together with their part-time military

obligations, form the “triad” many Reservists and Guardsmen balance every day. As these individuals mitigate tension in their lives, the DOD must also balance and seek efficiencies to maximize the scarce resources that the US Government will allocate. Therefore, if the RC is to be used for immediate response, logic follows that laws and overall expectations must change with respect to increased participation, which will drive increased funding.

The issue of funding an accessible immediate response RC requires a paradigm shift in DOD budgeting as well as changes to existing Title 10 participation statutes. The RAND Corporation, in its monograph on *Rethinking the Reserves*, presented three different varieties of “unconventional reserves” as alternative force structures: Intensive Reserves, Extended Reserves, and Cadre/New Forces.[41] The Intensive Reserve concept offers the most promising method to enable the use of the RC in an LD/HD role such as special operations. The study suggested that Intensive Reservists could train continuously for an extended period of time and then “might be able to deploy immediately after that training.” This method defeats the issue of training required for many RC forces prior to deployment.[42]

The concept of association in which units share equipment could easily fit into this arrangement to provide a certain capacity for a specified period of time. Senior leaders and individual Service programmers and planners must ultimately consider the efficacy of using this force structure option on a case-by-case basis, if adopted. The long-term end of the reversibility spectrum takes a more calculated, measured method to build needed capacity programmatically when warranted.

Reversing Decreased Force Structure: Programmatically-Delayed Response

Some areas of expertise allow extended response times for deployment or perhaps even for training for new missions. Army Combat Arms units are a good example. A given capacity level would provide the necessary forces to respond to real-time contingencies in the MCO realm which generally require a robust supply of personnel. The programmatic part of this scenario comes into play when additional capacity or different capabilities are needed for sustainment operations. The RAND study illuminated the RC portion of this scenario with the creative option to add cadre forces to the use of rotational AC and RC forces.[43]

Previous large-scale US conflicts utilized the Selective Service system, at least in part, to build military capacity. However, the stated policy of the US Government is continued use of the AVF.[44] Historical examples, such as WWII, provide a precedent for successful programmatic force structure changes while simultaneously conducting MCOs. The RAND concept of using cadre forces is a launching pad for a potential strategy in this arena:

> When the reserves are used with rotation, some reserve forces are not used until six years after the beginning of a conflict. This is more than enough time to recruit and train new forces. As a result, it might be cheaper to create new forces when they are needed…rather than maintain forces in the reserves, for some cadre units, DOD might maintain only the leaders in the reserves, plus ability to rapidly recruit and train…[45]

The six year timeframe presented in this example may be adequate for programming purposes; however, when training timelines are considered, the margin for error or variance narrows. Armed Services electing to plan and program to this concept must have outstanding corporate knowledge that fosters situational awareness concerning force structure capacity requirements. The RAND discussion conceded that

there is not much solid data available on the cadre concept; nonetheless, it offered several critical touchstones required if the cadre concept has hope for success: 1) ability to recognize when long-term stability operations forces are needed, 2) “the authority to authorize the larger forces,” and 3) the actual recruitment of the new forces.[46]

These concerns for implementing the cadre concept are present in most organizational paradigm shifts. RAND did not provide extensive detail on whether AC or RC forces will “fill” the cadre units when required. The term “cadre component” was ill-defined, though there is an implication that the cadre unit builds with AC forces. There was also an apparent conflict in whether the cadre manpower positions are AC or RC funded, but RAND acknowledged the cadre concept demands more study to determine its potential efficacy.[47] Even on the surface the utility and flexibility of this cadre concept are evident.

With an RC cadre, the costs associated with maintaining a training capacity are cut significantly. This is particularly helpful because the unit would be unproductive in its assigned unit mission since it is “skeletonized” with only a trained group of cadre members in funded manpower positions. Those cadre members could be mobilized or volunteer to “fill in” other unit gaps when needed. Optimally, “fill out” forces would be recruited or sourced from the AC.

Due to the expectation that these units would go into a stability operations rotation as soon as possible after reaching operating capability, there would be no inherent “discount” in building an RC force that would face immediate mobilization. Moreover, AC forces are generally easier to involuntarily move between units, which would likely be a requirement once the demand for increased capacity subsided. The

trained AC forces could be moved to other units in need of personnel and the RC cadre would remain available for the next potential round of buildup. The cadre concept for programmatic capacity building is clearly a creative alternative to maintaining excess force structure that warrants further consideration.

Choices and Costs

Fiscal constraints drive change which often requires taking intentional risk. Significant efforts have been made in both government and private sector agencies to analyze the different aspects of the changing landscape of the US armed forces. This paper suggests three main courses of action that warrant consideration: general status quo with rotational and strategic forces, immediate response RC forces, and programmatic expansion using a cadre force structure concept. These three options are not mutually exclusive and this paper assumes the status quo of rotational reserve forces will continue as a primary methodology in maintaining RC force structure. Nevertheless, the two innovative courses of action each have unique benefits and drawbacks, and each path yields its own required changes in culture or legal statute for effective implementation.

Immediate Response RC

There are undoubtedly ad hoc examples of this option routinely in use throughout the RC today; yet an intentional, structured focus on this option for the RC requires a change in participation expectations as well as a modification to existing law concerning the RC. In essence, the increased participation expectation drives the need for the law change. Services cannot expect their Reservists to participate in excess of levels prescribed by law, mobilization notwithstanding. A new participation category must be established by law to make this option possible. The major downside to a new formal

participation category is the possibility of an “A team” versus “B team” mentality developing within the RC. Perhaps the reality of living in a constrained environment outweighs the concern over intra-component equality.

Funding this concept would also require additional baseline funding for increased minimum participation levels, though contingency funds would still be used for deployed funding. Revised Title 10 language would need to specifically address the additional workload required of the new participation category. Sixty to ninety additional active duty days were suggested by RAND in its study, but the law should also provide for fiscal relief to the DOD in the instance that additional capacity is not needed. There should also be a provision that permits DOD to waive the levels required for an effective recruiting and retention (R/R) year in this participation category if the RC is not needed. This is the exact opposite of the concept of mobilization; it is key for DOD to preserve resources while maintaining the capability to quickly reverse force structure capacity for LD/HD mission sets.

Programmatic Expansion Using Cadre Concept

The cadre concept could effectively generate force structure following programmatic response to a new MCO requirement. One great benefit is that the mechanisms currently exist. Conceptual culture changes and programmatic mechanisms are required to implement this course of action. The institutional forces for each Service must be prepared to recognize the need to fill the cadre units with trained forces when extended stability operations are anticipated. The authority to fund and hire additional forces would ideally come from existing processes in the DOD programming process.

The primary question is manpower architecture for the cadre component. Placing the funded cadre positions in the “skeletonized” units with force positions remaining unfunded is one option. This structure negates the requirement for the institutional force to reprogram each time force structure capacity increases are required. However, this creates two potential resource drains: a potential requirement for overhead to support the cadre force, and the dilemma of how to best utilize a unit with no current mission. One could argue that this construct is also inherently agile because these resources could be used as needed, even in missions such as Homeland Defense.

Using IMAs as cadre within an AC unit creates perhaps the greatest economy of scale. Not only would that Reservist cadre be available to train a new unit when called to do so, they would also be available as productive members of the AC unit when increased large-scale capacity was not needed. This augmentation actually creates a secondary mechanism of reversibility that could ease normal, smaller scale fluctuation periods in the AC. The downsides are that the programmed units would then need to include leadership positions in their structure; also, once IMAs shifted to cadre duties, they would no longer be available to the AC unit as capacity-builders. Those opportunity costs, however, are counterbalanced by the versatility provided by the continuous presence of Reservists in AC units. They would form an effective continuum of experience for the overall force.

Conclusion

The world rarely works in absolutes or extremes. The concept of reversibility is no different. In reality, the term reversibility is a word that was chosen to represent a concept important in framing Defense strategy. Expandability, capacity-building, and force regeneration are other terms that also fit the context presented in Defense

strategic guidance. The fiscal constraints currently facing the DOD demand a broad, flexible strategy to maintain a strategic military edge in a VUCA environment.

There is no reason to eliminate the use of rotational forces where consistent, predictable missions exist. In addition to the continued use of rotational reserve forces, the two capacity-building methods presented will serve the DOD as effective means to preserve capability and enable a reversal in force structure capacity when needed. The addition of a new participation status for immediate response in LD/HD missions will provide increased capacity at a reduced cost. On the other side of the coin, the cadre concept will enable efficient unit-level expansion when needed.

The diverse nature of the US military requires flexible programming opportunities. Creative options are needed to provide Service staffs with choices that fit different mission sets. Successful implementation of the strategy to include two new RC force structure methodologies requires staff planners to accurately classify and program units. A secondary requirement is that the programs must be executed with the intent to preserve resources. In general, a perpetually-mobilized RC is generally not more affordable than the AC per capita; it is nothing but an ad hoc AC. Programmatic and fiscal discipline will undoubtedly create a reversible, agile AC/RC force structure with unmatched capabilities to achieve the ends required by US Defense strategy.

Endnotes

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